

Message Text

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LIMDIS, FOR ASST SEC HABIB

FOL REPEAT BANGKOK 3677 SENT ACTION SECSTATE
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S E C R E T BANGKOK 3677

LIMDIS

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MARR, TH, US
SUBJECT: RESIDUAL U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE

REF: BANGKOK 3366

1. IN ORDER TO TRY TO CLARIFY THE STATE OF OUR NEGOTIATIONS
WITH THE RTG ON THE RESIDUAL U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE IN THAI-
LAND, DCM MASTERS AND I MET WITH PRIME MINISTER KHUKRIT AT
HIS HOME THIS AFTERNOON. KHUKRIT APPEARED GENUINELY
UNAWARE OF THE MANY DIFFICULTIES WE HAVE BEEN CONFRONTING
AND UNDERTOOK TO GIVE INSTRUCTIONS WHICH WOULD BRING THE
NEGOTIATIONS BACK INTO FOCUS ALONG THE LINES WE HAVE BEEN
DISCUSSING WITH HIM AND FOREIGN MINISTER CHATCHAI OVER
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THE PAST SEVERAL MONTHS.

2. I OPENED THE CONVERSATION BY REVIEWING FOR KHUKRIT
THE DEVELOPMENTS WHICH HAD OCCURRED SINCE OUR MEETING

ON FEBRUARY 2 AND GAVE HIM COPIES OF OUR NOTE (BANGKOK 2396) AND THE NOTE FROM MFA WITH REGARD TO THE SEVEN PRINCIPLES. I EXPLAINED THAT I WAS WELL AWARE OF MFA'S DESIRE TO HAVE THAI/U.S. RELATIONS HANDLED TO THE EXTENT POSSIBLE IN THAT CHANNEL, BUT NOTED THAT MFA APPEARED TO BE HAVING CONSIDERABLE DIFFICULTY IN OBTAINING GOVERNMENTWIDE DECISIONS ON OUR RESIDUAL PRESENCE. THE SEVEN PRINCIPLES WERE NOT IN THEMSELVES A DIFFICULT HURDLE AND I WAS CONFIDENT THAT DIFFERENCES OF VIEW COULD BE RESOLVED. THE WHOLE QUESTION OF JURISDICTION WAS A THORNY ONE, HOWEVER, AND NOT ONE WHICH COULD BE NEGOTIATED QUICKLY, PARTICULARLY IF THE THAI NEGOTIATORS WERE PREOCCUPIED WITH THE FORTHCOMING ASEAN SUMMIT MEETING. IT THEREFORE APPEARED TO ME THAT THE END OF FEBRUARY DEADLINE SET BY ANAN WAS UNREALISTIC.

3. I WENT ON TO POINT OUT THAT IN MY MOST RECENT TALK WITH CHATCHAI (BANGKOK 2502) AND FROM THE REPORTS I WAS GETTING FROM THE U.S. PARTICIPANTS IN RELATED NEGOTIATIONS, IT APPEARED TO ME THAT THE RTG MIGHT HAVE CHANGED ITS MIND AND THAT THE UNDERSTANDING WHICH I HAD REACHED WITH THE PRIME MINISTER IN AUGUST AND HAD FURTHER DEVELOPED IN MY DISCUSSIONS WITH CHATCHAI WERE NO LONGER VALID. I COMMENTED THAT CHATCHAI AND ANA SUDDENLY APPEARED TO BELIEVE THAT OUR MANY TALKS HAD BEEN MERELY IDLE CONVERSATION, AND I INQUIRED WHETHER A THAI DECISION HAD BEEN TAKEN TO POSTPONE THE REACHING OF FINAL AGREEMENTS WITH REGARD TO OUR RESIDUAL PRESENCE UNTIL AFTER THE THAI ELECTIONS ON APRIL 4TH.

4. THE PRIME MINISTER SEEMED GENUINELY ASTONISHED AT THIS TURN OF EVENTS. HE SAID THAT AS FAR AS HE KNEW, EVERYTHING WAS GOING WELL IN THE U.S./THAI NEGOTIATIONS AND THAT THERE HAD BEEN NO REPEAT NO CHANGE OF HEART ON THE PART OF THE RTG. HE COM-
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MENTED THAT THE PRESENT ELECTION CAMPAIGN SHOULD HAVE NO EFFECT ON THE WORKING OUT OF DETAILED UNDERSTANDINGS.

5. THE PRIME MINISTER THEN STUDIED BOTH NOTES AND COMMENTED THAT OURS WAS EXACTLY RIGHT. THE IMPORTANT THING WAS TO ARRANGE NOMINAL TURNOVER CEREMONIES FOR PUBLIC CONSUMPTION AT WHICH THE AMERICAN FLAG WOULD BE SOLEMNLY LOWERED. OPERATIONS SHOULD CONTINUE, HOWEVER, AS IN THE PAST.

6. TURNING TO THE THAI NOTE ON THE SEVEN PRINCIPLES, KHUKRIT AGREED THAT THE POINTS WHICH DEALT WITH

JURISDICTION AND PRIVILEGES WOULD REQUIRE DETAILED NEGOTIATIONS. HE COMMENTED THAT SOME CHANGE WOULD OBVIOUSLY HAVE TO BE BROUGHT ABOUT IN THE AGREEMENTS UNDER WHICH WE ARE CURRENTLY OPERATING BUT THAT THIS WAS NOT A PROBLEM OF ANY PARTICULAR URGENCY AND THAT THE WAY THINGS WERE NOW BEING DONE WAS ENTIRELY SATISFACTORY WITH HIM. THE IMPORTANT QUESTION WAS COVERED BY OUR NOTE, TO WHAT OPERATIONS SHOULD CONTINUE AS BEFORE AND NOMINAL TURNOVERS SHOULD BE ARRANGED. THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THAT HE UNDERSTOOD HOW COMPLEX THE QUESTION OF JURISDICTION, PRIVILEGES AND IMMUNITIES COULD BE. HE SAID THAT THE STATUS OF U.S. MILITARY PERSONNEL WAS OBVIOUSLY NOT COMPARABLE TO THAT OF FOREIGN AID TECHNICIANS. I REPEATED THAT IN OUR VIEW IT WOULD BE BEST TO CONTINUE UNDER EXISTING AGREEMENT UNTIL SOMETHING ELSE WAS WORKED OUT. THE PRIME MINISTER AGREED.

7. THE PRIME MINISTER ASKED WHETHER ANAN WAS THE INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS NEW TURN IN OUR NEGOTIATIONS. I REPLIED THAT WE BELIEVED THIS WAS SO. THE PRIME MINISTER COMMENTED WITH A SMILE THAT ANAN AND MFA LIKED TO MAKE THINGS MORE COMPLICATED THAN THEY NEEDED TO BE. HE SAID HE HAD TALKED TO CHATCHAI JUST PRIOR TO OUR MEETING AND THAT CHATCHAI HAD TOLD HIM THAT THE NEGOTIATIONS WERE GOING WELL AND THAT THERE WERE NO PROBLEMS. HE WAS THEREFORE SURPRISED TO SEE HOW MUDDLED THINGS HAD
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BECOME.

8. I THEN GAVE KHUKRIT A LISTING WHICH WE HAVE PREPARED OF THE AMERICAN UNITS WHICH WOULD COMPRISE OUR RESIDUAL PRESENCE WITH THE NUMBERS OF U.S. MILITARY PERSONNEL IN EACH UNIT. GLANCING OVER THE LIST THE PRIME MINISTER COMMENTED THAT THIS PRESENCE SEEMED TO BE PERFECTLY SATISFACTORY. THE IMPORTANT THING TO HIM WAS TO WORK THINGS OUT IN A WAY THAT AVOIDED UNNECESSARY POLITICAL PROBLEMS AND THE SOLEMN LOWERING OF THE FLAG CEREMONY WAS THE KEY TO DISSIPATING OBJECTIONS TO THE AMERICAN RESIDUAL PRESENCE.

9. I TOLD THE PRIME MINISTER THAT TO BE SURE THERE WERE NO MISUNDERSTOODINGS, I SHOULD DRAW HIS ATTENTION TO THE FACT THAT A U-2 ELEMENT AND SOME P-3S WERE PART OF THE RESIDUAL FORCE, AND I COMMENTED THAT IF HE THOUGHT THESE MIGHT GIVE HIM PROBLEMS AT ELECTION TIME, WE COULD PROBABLY ARRANGE FOR THEM TO BE OUT OF THAILAND DURING A SENSITIVE PERIOD. THE PRIME MINISTER REPLIED THAT

THE NSC HAD BEEN VERY ENTHUSIASTIC REGARDING THE CONTINUATION OF U-2 OPERATIONS AND THAT HIS POSITION WOULD BE THAT ALL AMERICAN COMBAT FORCES HAD LEFT. NO ONE COULD PRETEND THAT RAMASUN OR THE OTHER INSTALLATIONS WE WERE DISCUSSING WERE CONNECTED WITH COMBAT.

10. THE PRIME MINISTER GLANCED AGAIN AT THE ROSTER OF OUR RESIDUAL PRESENCE AND INQUIRED WHETHER THE APPROXIMATELY THOUSAND PERSONNEL AT UTAPAO WERE INTENDED TO REMAIN OVER A PROTRACTED PERIOD. I REPLIED THAT CINCPAC INTENDED TO SEND A TEAM TO THAILAND IN MAY WHEN THE DUST HAD SETTLED A BIT AND WOULD TAKE ANOTHER HARD LOOK AT THE STAFFING OF UTAPAO. THE PRIME MINISTER AGREED THAT THIS WOULD BE DESIRABLE.

11. THE PRIME MINISTER THEN RETURNED TO THE QUESTION OF RAMASUN. AN APPROPRIATE CEREMONY SHOULD
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BE CARRIED OUT THERE, HE SAID, BUT IT MIGHT BE WISE TO MOVE SLOWLY ON DETAILED ARRANGEMENTS. IF THE SOCIALIST AND NEW FORCE PARTIES WERE ELECTED, PEOPLE WOULD COME TO OFFICE WITH WHOM THE KIND OF THING WHICH RAMASUN DOES SHOULD NOT BE SHARED. COMMENT: WE DID NOT PRESS FOR CLARIFICATION OF THIS RATHER DELPHIC STATEMENT AS IT IS CLEAR THAT THE ELECTION OF A GOVERNMENT PLEDGED TO A TOTAL U.S. WITHDRAWAL WOULD, IN ANY EVENT, RESULT IN THE CLOSURE OF RAMASUN. AS DEPARTMENT IS AWARE, WE BELIEVE KHUKRIT AND THE MILITARY WILL TAKE WHATEVER STEPS ARE NECESSARY TO PREVENT THIS CONTINGENCY FROM ARISING.

12. THE PRIME MINISTER SAID HE WOULD GET IN TOUCH WITH HIS ADVISERS RIGHT AWAY AND THEN TALK WITH CHATCHAI. HE ASKED WHAT URGENCY WE ATTACHED TO THIS PROBLEM. I REPLIED THAT RELIEF FROM THE FEBRUARY DEADLINE WAS THE MOST URGENT PROBLEM AND THAT I BELIEVED OTHER THINGS COULD BE SORTED ONCE THE THAI POSITION WAS CLARIFIED.

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